

**Sociology of Education**  
**SOC 307/EDS 307**

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Fall/Spring 201\_

Instructor: Jennifer Nelson

Class meetings: Tuesday, Thursdays, and Fridays, 9:00-9:50 a.m.

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Office hours: Tuesdays 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., or by appointment

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

**Content:** This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to current theory and research on the role of education in contemporary society. The course begins with a review of three alternative sociological perspectives on the roles of the education in society. With these perspectives in mind, we will examine the historical development of the public education system in the United States and role of schooling in stratification and socialization processes, focusing on how schools – as social organizations – contribute to social mobility and reproduction of the social order. The perspectives also inform our look at past and current U.S. education policy, and the role that sociology plays in informing policy. In the next section of the course we read about race, ethnicity, and gender in schooling, focusing on sociological explanations for differences in student outcomes and experiences. We explore the importance of students' 'home background,' or social class, on their achievement, and how this forms an intersection between schools and other social institutions, such as families, neighborhoods, and the economy. We then examine the organization of teachers' work and the structure of the teaching profession. Finally, we look at the transition from high school to college and the stratification of postsecondary education in the United States.

**Texts:** There are three required books for the course (see below). There are also additional required readings, available as PDF files on the course's Blackboard site.

1. Schmidt, William and Curtis McKnight. 2012. *Inequality for All: The Challenge of Unequal Opportunity in American Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press. [ISBN 978-0-8077-5341-5]
2. Richard Arum, Irene Beattie, and Karly Ford (ABF). 2015. [2011]. *The Structure of Schooling: Readings in the Sociology of American Education*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) Pine Forge Press. ISBN: 9781412980395
3. Lewis, Amanda E., and John B. Diamond. 2015. *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. Oxford University Press.

## COURSE GOALS

All of the assignments and exams in this class relate to the following three goals, common to all courses in the Sociology Department:

1. <b>Written Communication:</b> Students should be able to display effective writing and editing using conventions and formats appropriate to social science fields.
2. <b>Social Research:</b> Students should be able to formulate empirical research questions, identify the major methods for collecting data to answer questions and the major advantages and disadvantages of each method, and demonstrate a basic understanding of the principles to employ in analyzing data.
3. <b>Sociological Theory:</b> Students should understand and be able to apply major perspectives in sociology, including those dealing with the structure and functioning of social groups, the relations between groups and individuals, and the importance of social location in affecting life outcomes. In particular, students should be able to apply these perspectives to the analysis of historical and/or current events and conditions.

Substantive Goals: Throughout the progression of the course, we will examine these increasingly complex topics: social structure, culture, the self, organizations, and inequalities by race/class/gender/sexuality. This course is designed to help you develop your own sociological imagination and approach educational research from a sociological perspective, a process that involves:

- Writing in the expository mode for the two written assignments, which furthermore call specifically for synthesis and analysis of multiple sources (Goal 1);
- Obtaining and evaluating empirical research relevant to the issues you are interested in exploring, as well as demonstrating competence in evaluating the empirical merits and drawbacks of the research we review in class (Goal 2);
- Applying and using sociological concepts, terms, and theories to interpret educational issues (Goal 3); and
- Thinking critically about your own life and educational experiences from a *sociological perspective*, which means also understanding your own social location and how that location influences your experiences, decisions, perceptions, and actions (Goal 3).

Non- Substantive Goals: In addition to mastering the above concepts, theories, and methodologies that are central to the discipline of sociology, it is my hope that you will develop important **theoretical foundations** by the end of this course that you are able to apply to or contrast with theories you have encountered in other sociology courses, other education courses, or other social science courses (Goal 3). In addition, I hope that this course will serve as an opportunity to strengthen your critical **writing skills**, that is, your ability to synthesize separate authors' arguments in a manner that goes beyond summarizing and instead demonstrates analytic and interpretive value. Toward this end, I will evaluate not only the content, but also the written structure of your two written assignments using rubrics (rubrics to be distributed at later date).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade for the course will be determined by the following components:

**1. Attendance is strongly encouraged and is part of your participation grade.** I will use lectures to give you additional information not found in the readings, and I will also provide frameworks for understanding and integrating the readings with the lecture material. We will also have discussion in class to help clarify all the material, so you need to show up so that you can participate in this. *Missing two or fewer classes will benefit your participation grade.* This includes mandatory attendance at two movie nights, held outside of class time.

### **2. Participation (20% total)**

Not only your attendance, but also your participation during class counts. Your voluntary responses to my questions about the lecture material, your own observations of social life, your interpretations of the material, or your recall or analysis of the readings, as well as your willingness to engage when I pose a question specifically to you are important. Part of your participation grade also contains your 5-minute “Media Minute” mini-presentation to the class once during the semester, and a once-weekly, multiple-choice reading quiz. For the Media Minute, you will sign up for a day to present an interesting recent newspaper or magazine article about a contemporary education or education policy issue to the class. I will provide a midterm participation grade to each student based on these things, so that you have a sense of how to improve if necessary.

### **3. Two written assignments (30% total)**

Below are general guidelines for the two papers. I will hand out instructions for these assignments during the semester. All written assignments must be printed and given to me during class. I do not accept assignments through email.

*Paper 1*, worth 15%, is an essay (3-5 pages). You will be given a number of newspaper articles discussing current educational issues. Select ONE of these articles and analyze the issue it discusses using TWO of the theoretical perspectives covered in class. Due Tuesday, February 25.

*Paper 2*, worth 15%, is a critical review essay (5-7 pages) contrasting one of the required course readings with an additional reading on the same subject. This reading must come from an ACADEMIC source and must have been published in 2000 or later. I suggest using Google Scholar or ERIC as a starting point in searching for the additional reading. Selecting a reading from ABF that we have not covered in class may also be a good option, but check with me first. If you are uncertain as to whether your reading is academic or would like a recommendation, check with me. Due Friday, April 11.

### **4. Two exams (50% total)**

*Midterm Exam (25%)* – an in-class examination to be given Tuesday, March 4.

*Final Exam (25%)* – an in-class final exam; date, time, and location of exam TBA

- Both exams will be in-class, written exams.
- The Final will be given during the University scheduled Final Exam period for this class (and cannot be rescheduled).
- The exams will consist of a combination of short answer and essay questions, and they will cover both the readings and lecture material.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

### **Accommodating Disabilities:**

If you have or acquire any sort of condition that may require special accommodation(s), please inform me AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (e.g., not the day of an exam) so that we may make the appropriate arrangements. Proper documentation from the Office of Disabilities Services will be required. Please contact their office to get more information on available services and accommodations, as well as documentation requirements. They can be reach at 404-727-6016 or via the web at <http://www.ods.emory.edu>.

### **Academic Conduct:**

All students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the policies of Emory College with respect to conduct and academic honesty. Anyone engaging in acts that violate these policies, such as plagiarism or cheating, will be referred to the Honors Council. For more information on the Emory Honor Code, see [http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor\\_code.html](http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html).

### **Make-Up Policy:**

My permission is needed to make-up exams and the short assignments. If you are going to miss an exam or assignment, please make every effort to notify me before the missed class and to gather appropriate material to justify your absence. If you are unable to notify me before the class/due date, please try to have a friend, roommate, etc. contact me via e-mail and inform me of your absence. A mutually convenient time will be arranged for you to make up the assignment. Makeup assignments will *only* be allowed in a situation of an excused absence (e.g., illness, family emergency, etc.). A note from the Dean will be required to make up the final exam.

### **Cell Phone & Laptop Use:**

The use of cell phones is not permitted in this class. Please turn OFF your phones before entering the classroom. In addition, the use of laptops is discouraged. The instructor reserves the right to request that you discontinue the use of your laptop if she notices it being used for distracting or course-unrelated purposes.

## CLASS & READINGS SCHEDULE

A note on the readings: You are expected to complete the readings **before** class each week. We will discuss some of the readings in class, so both the reading and class attendance are important. Some of the readings are more difficult than others, and some weeks there is a heavier reading load than other weeks. I will give you guidance on “how” to read the articles, particularly the more difficult ones. If you have trouble understanding any of the readings or the lecture material, please feel free to talk to me during office hours.

Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) will be posted on Blackboard.

### I. Sociological Theories of Education

January 14 (Tu)– What is distinctive about a sociological view of education?

January 16 (Th) – The Functionalist Perspective

Becker, G. 1975. *Human Capital*, Ch. 5 in ABF.

\*Davis, K., & Moore, W. E. 1945. “Some principles of stratification.” *American Sociological Review* 10(2): 242-249.

January 17 (F)

\*Dewey, J. 1897. “My pedagogic creed.” *The School Journal* 54(3), 77-80.

\*Dreeben, R. 1977. “The contribution of schooling to the learning of norms.” Pp. 544-549 in Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey, (eds.) *Power and ideology in education*. New York: Oxford University Press.

January 21 (Tu) – Conflict Perspective: Status Conflict Theory and Class Theory

Collins, R. “Functional and Conflict Theories of Education.” Ch. 10 in ABF.

Cookson, P., and C. Persell. “The Chosen Ones.” Ch. 12 in ABF.

January 23 (Th)

Rosenbaum, J. and Binder, A. “Do Employers Really Need More Educated Youth?” Ch. 41 in ABF.

Bowles, S., and Gintis, H. “Beyond the Educational Frontier: The Great American Dream Freeze.” Ch. 11 in ABF.

January 24 (F)

Lamont, M., and Lareau, A. “Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments.” Ch. 6 in ABF.

Stevens, M. *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Ch. 46 in ABF.

January 28 (Tu) – Institutional Perspective

Chubb, J., and Moe, T. “An Institutional Perspective on Schools.” Ch. 44 in ABF.

Meyer, J. “The Effects of Education as an Institution.” Ch. 42 ABF.

January 30 (Th)

\*McNeil, L. (1988). *Contradictions of control: School structure and school knowledge*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 7-9.

January 31 (F)

\*Riehl, C. J., Pallas, A. M., & Natriello, G. (1999). Rites and wrongs: Institutional explanations for the student course-scheduling process in urban high schools. *American Journal of Education*, 107, 116-154.

**II. Framing The ‘Crisis’ in Education**

Documentary Film: *Waiting for Superman*

February 4 (Tu) – What are schools for, Who should control them, and Can we fix the gaps?

Schmidt & McKnight. 2012. *Inequality for All*. Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 2 (“One Indivisible Nation?”)

February 6 (Th) – Schools in the Media and Educational Reform

\* Ravich, D. 2010. “Hijacked! How the Standards Movement Turned into the Testing Movement.” Ch. 2 in *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*.  
\*National Commission on Excellence in Education, “A Nation at Risk”

February 7 (F) – The School Choice Movement

\*Renzulli, L. and V. Roscigno. 2005. “Charter School Policy, Implementation, and Diffusion Across the U.S.” *Sociology of Education* 78(4): 344-366.

**III. Researching Schools: Methodology**

February 11 (Tu)

\*Riordan, C. 2004. *Equality and Achievement*. Chapter 2, “Methodological Issues in Studying Education.”

**IV. History of Education in the United States**

February 13 -14 (Th-F) – The Development and Growth of the American Educational System

\*Goldstein, D. 2014. *The Teacher Wars*. Selection.

**V. Schools and Socialization**

February 18 (Tu)– The Importance of Social Capital to Socialization

Coleman, J., and Hoffer, T. “Schools, Families, and Communities.” Ch. 7 in ABF.  
Coleman, J. Ch. 36 in ABF. “The Adolescent Subculture.”

February 20 (Th)– Managing Disorder in the Classroom and in the School

McFarland, D. “Resistance as Social Drama: A Study of Change-Oriented Encounters.” Ch. 37 in ABF.

February 21 (F) – NO CLASS

February 25 (Tu) – The Hidden Curriculum and Socialization

**PAPER 1 DUE**

Khan, S. 2010. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Selection in ABF.

February 27 (Th) – REVIEW

February 28 (F) – NO CLASS

MIDTERM EXAM – MARCH 4 <sup>th</sup> (Tu)
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## **VI. Schools and Stratification**

March 6 (Th) Between-school stratification: School Quality, Racial and Gender Composition, and Public vs. Private Education

Schmidt & McKnight. 2012. *Inequality for All*. Chapter 3 (“Social Class, Race, and Equality of Opportunity”).

March 7 (F)

Coleman, J., et al. “Equality of Educational Opportunity: The Coleman Report.” Ch. 14 in ABF.

March 11, 13, 14 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

March 18 (T) – Between School Stratification, *con’t*: School Finance, Summer Learning, School Size

Schmidt & McKnight. 2012. *Inequality for All*. Chapter 6 (“Contributors to Inequality in Content Coverage: The Role of Organizational Structure”).

\*Kozol, J. *Savage Inequalities*, excerpt.

March 20 (Th)

Orfield, G., and Lee, C. “Brown at 50.” Ch. 16 in ABF.

Entwisle, D., et al. “The Nature of Schooling.” Ch. 17 in ABF.

March 21 (F) – Within-school stratification

Schmidt & McKnight. 2012. *Inequality for All*. Chapter 4 (“Into the Classroom: The Content Opportunities Children Actually Experience”) and Chapter 5 (“Tracking: Further along the Road to Inequality”)

March 25 (Tu)

Hallinan, M. “Tracking: From Theory to Practice.” Ch. 18 in ABF.

Gamoran, J. “Is Ability Grouping Equitable?” Ch. 19 in ABF.

Oakes, J. “The Distribution of Knowledge.” Ch. 20 in ABF

## **VII. Gender, Race, and Class Effects in Schooling**

March 27 (Th) – Gender and Schooling

\*Mickelson, R. “Why Does Jane Read and Write so Well? The Anomaly of Women's Achievement.” In ABF.

\*Grant, L. 1994. “Helpers, Enforcers, and Go-Betweens.” Pp. 43-63 in Women of Color in U.S. Society, ed. by M.B. Zinn. Temple University Press.

April 1 (Tu) – Racial and ethnic minorities and schooling

Fordham, S., and Ogbu, J. “Black Students’ School Success: Coping with the Burden of ‘Acting White.’” Ch. 25 ABF.

Tyson, K. “Desegregation without Integration: Tracking, Black Students, and Acting White after Brown” in ABF.

April 4 (F) – NO CLASS

April 8 (Tu): Class and Schooling

Bettie, J. "Exceptions to the Rule: Upwardly Mobile White and Mexican American High School Girls." Ch. 24 ABF.

Willis, P. *Learning to Labor*. Selection in ABF.

April 10 (Th) – Intersectionality: The Compounded Effects of Race, Class and Gender in Schools

\*Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families." *American Sociological Review*: 747-776.

\*Roscigno, V., and Ainsworth-Darnell, J. 1999. "Race, cultural capital, and educational resources: Persistent inequalities and achievement returns." *Sociology of education*:158-178.

April 11-17 (F, T, Th)

PAPER 2 DUE

Lewis, Amanda E., and John B. Diamond. 2015. *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. Oxford University Press. (entire book).

**VIII. Teachers and Teaching**

April 18 (F)

\*Lortie, D. 2002. *Schoolteacher*. Ch. 1.

April 22 (Tu)

\*Zumwalt, K., and Craig, E. 2005 "Teachers' characteristics: Research on the demographic profile." *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*, Ed. by Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, p.111-156.

April 24 (Th)

Lortie, D. 2002 *Schoolteacher*. Ch. 5-6.

**IX. Educational Transitions**

April 25 (F) – The transition from high school to college

\*Roderick, M., Coca, V, and Nagaoka, J. 2011. "Potholes on the Road to College: High School Effects in Shaping Urban Students' Participation in College Application, Four-year College Enrollment, and College Match." *Sociology of Education* 84: 178-211.